

DRAPER 29



# Curios and Relics

## Clothing

### Boots – Assassination

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# BOOTS THAT LINCOLN WORE WHEN ASSASSINATED

**F**EW people know that the boots worn by Lincoln on the night of his assassination are in the possession of a family residing in Lynn. How this family came to have them in their keeping is interesting, although of no historical importance.

As far as the writer knows, no historian has ever recorded the name of the man in whose room Lincoln breathed his last. History simply states that "the wounded President was borne tenderly across the street from the theatre, and in a dingy little room of a lodging house, his life ebbed away."

The room was rented by two clerks employed in one of the various departments of the Massachusetts state agency, in charge of Gardiner Tufts, who after the war was appointed warden of the Concord reformatory. The names of these two men were Augustus and William Clark, and although their surnames were similar, they were not relatives. On the night of Lincoln's murder William Clark went to the theatre, but as the play did not interest him, he left early. As he was standing on the steps of his lodging house, undecided whether to go in to bed or not, he saw something was wrong across the way. He hurried across the street to find out what the trouble was, and learned that the President had been shot, and soon he was brought out by

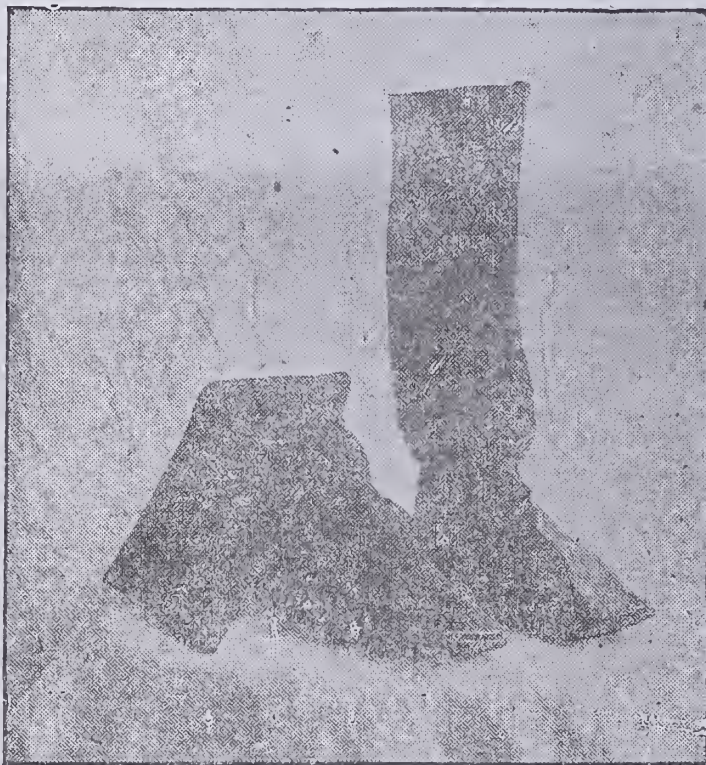
he could not pay, he brought the relics to his creditor. "I'm going west to make my fortune," he said; "keep these things for security until I can pay you. They are certainly worth all of my indebtedness, and in time will probably be more valuable still, if I do not come for them. But I shall certainly redeem them as soon as I can."

Clark departed and was never heard of again. He has doubtless been in his grave for many a year. The boots were then brought to Lynn, and have been there ever since.

The boots are old-fashioned, long-legged affairs, with square toes. They are very large, probably 10s or 12s, although they are much narrower than one would suppose a man of his height could wear. The upper part of the legs are made of a heavy, reddish-brown leather, but the rest of the boot is of a fine, black material. They show considerable wear, although not worn through at any part.

A pair of blue worsted socks were with them, and the socks had been darned with big white stitches, evidently done by Lincoln himself. Moths destroyed them some years ago, and they were burned.

For over 30 years now these boots have been hidden away, only exhibited on special occasions. To the boys of



LINCOLN'S BOOTS.

a group of men. "Where shall we carry him?" asked someone. "Bring him into my room," said Clark, quickly.

Thus it happened that the President was carried to the little room on 10th st. After Lincoln died and his body was removed, the Clarks' room was left in disorder. Lincoln's socks, his boots, soiled towels used to staunch his life blood and bits of hair cut from around the fatal wound were thrown about the floor. Clark kept the boots, the socks and a bit of hair and towel as sacred relics.

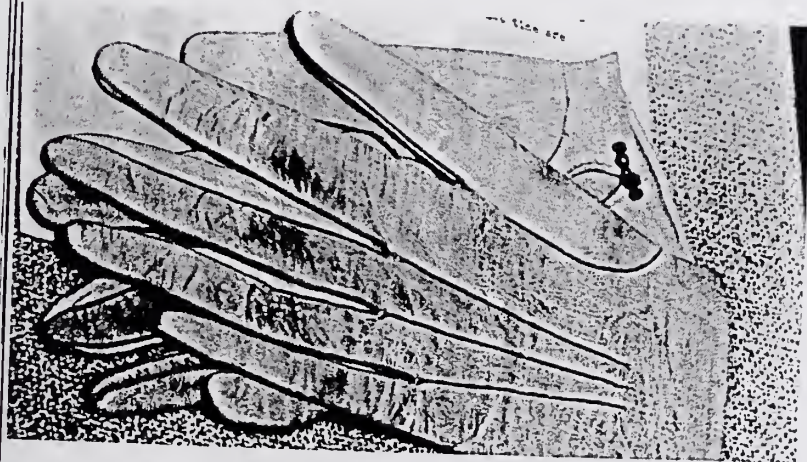
But Clark owed considerable money and was indebted to another Massachusetts man, employed in the agency, quite heavily. As time went on and

the family, when they grew old enough to realize, they have always been a object of veneration, although small boys they have not always realized their value. The writer has often heard it told of a certain young man who wanted to go fishing one rainy day and couldn't, because he had wet shoes in the morning. All at once a bright idea struck him. He posted up to the owner of the boots and asked if he couldn't borrow them for the afternoon, promising to return them after he had used them. He was highly indignant when he was denied the privilege and wanted to know what the "old boots were good for if a feller couldn't wear them fishing?"—Superintendent and Foreman.

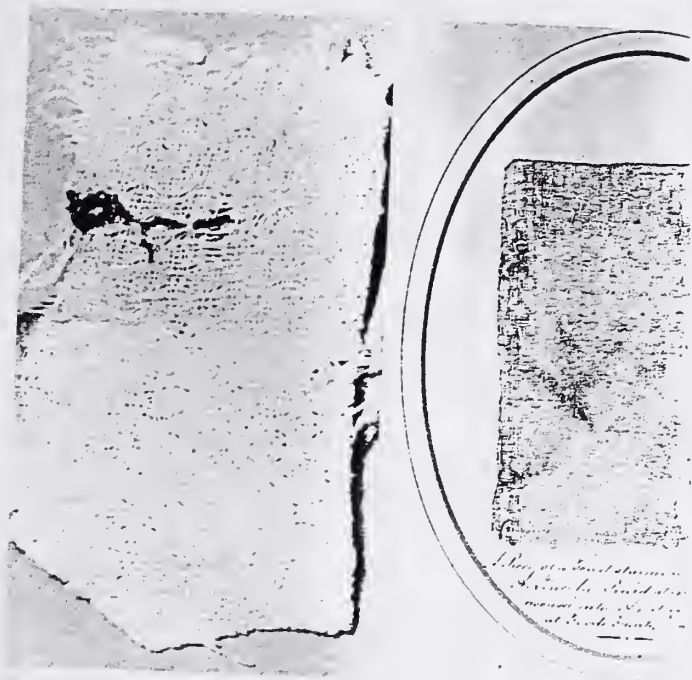




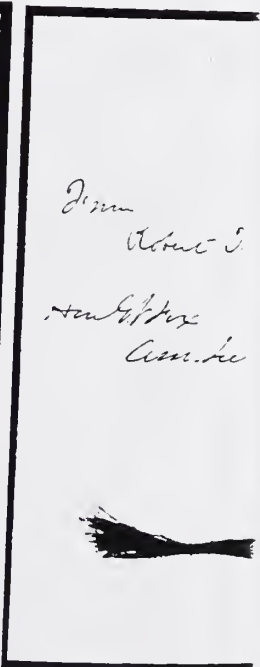
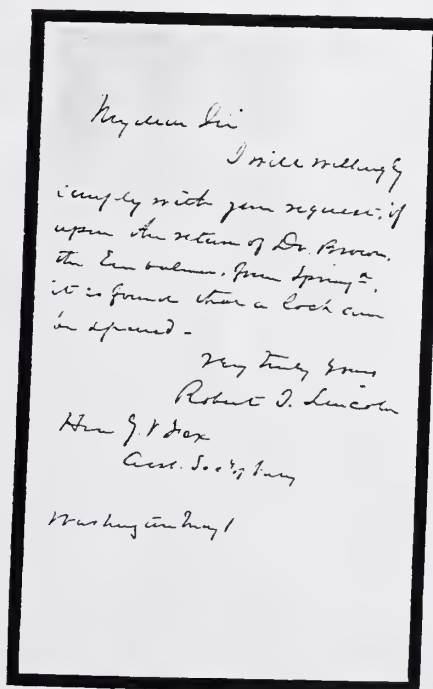
Willie Clark kept Lincoln's black leather boots with their gay maroon goatskin tops, which were left behind in Clark's room on the death night.



The second pair of white kid gloves found stuffed in Lincoln's overcoat pocket was given by Mrs. Lincoln to her sister's son-in-law, Edward L. Baker, editor of the *Illinois State Journal*.



These are swatches of the towels that were laid over the bloodsoaks every time Mrs. Lincoln visited the death room in the Petersen.



One of the most treasured relics was a lock of Lincoln's hair. This one was sent to a friend by Robert Lincoln.

COPY

ROBERT C. MARCOTTE  
P.O. Box 3303  
Peabody, Mass. 01960

7/22/83

Dr. John K. Lattimer  
Presbyterian Hospital  
622 West 168th Street  
New York, New York 10032

Dear Dr. Lattimer:

A mutual friend, John C. Brennan, has given me your address and, I believe, has told you that I'd be writing. I have been working on a story connected with Lincoln's assassination and you come highly recommended as an expert on that subject. My interest centers around the boots Lincoln had on that night, as well as a lock of his hair, a bloody towel, and his socks. These items were in Lynn, Mass., for 70 years in the "care" of a family whose grandfather had gotten them from William Clark in return for a loan. I have had the good fortune to tape-record both granddaughters involved (one of whom has since died, and the other of whom is in her 80's in a nursing home). The boots were all that survived the passage of time and were finally donated to Ford's Theatre in 1947 by the now-deceased sister. As far as local history is concerned, the boots have a fascinating history. They were brought to schools in Lynn by this sister, a history teacher, and there are people walking in the streets today who can say they walked in Lincoln's boots. There are other stories connected with them, such as P.T. Barnum and Henry Ford wanting them, etc. The story, I think, warrants some national attention, and I have hopes of getting it written up for YANKEE. Of course, you are familiar with the April 1979 issue which had the article on the famous, or should I say infamous, Augustus Clark! John and I have had many letters pass between us on that guy. I also had the pleasure of meeting him on a recent information gathering trip to Washington, D.C. This leads me to write to you.

I have many questions about the actual shooting, walk across the street, the death watch, and the removal of the body. I have read everything I can get my hands on, but I am sure that I am woefully deficient in not having read as yet the definitive works on the subject. John has told me of The Death of Lincoln by Clara Laughlin. I have also been made aware of the Great American Myth. I have not read either of these yet but will try to locate them and do so shortly. I wonder if you might be able to suggest other sources from which I can extract credible information about the affairs from 10:15 pm 4/14/65 until about 9:00 am 4/15/65? I would most appreciate any help.

This subject gets more fascinating the more I get into it. No doubt many find it so. Every little microscopic bit about Lincoln only whets the appetite for more. Oh, before I forget to mention it, I understand that you have some items connected with the assassination. Bloodsoaked items? I would be most interested if you could tell me how these made their way to you. I have a fairly good idea how some of the things in Ford's Theatre got there because I have seen the accession file, but here are some other items that exist. It would help me put the chain of custody of the four items I mentioned into perspective. I know your time is valuable, but I think you are one source that I should not fail to consult.

Yours truly,  
(s) Bob  
Robert C. Marcotte





